

Glaring Errors

The Clarion-Ledger story on Tuesday, September 4, 2007, (“More in Miss. lack insurance”) contained factual errors that we’ve asked be corrected by the newspaper as soon as possible.

1. The story says that from 2005 to 2006, the number of people reporting coverage under Medicaid dropped from 601,000 to 497,000.

Actually, according to official statistics of the Division of Medicaid, there were 701,435 people on Medicaid in 2005; 643,000 people on Medicaid as of June 30, 2006; and 612,000 people on Medicaid as of June 30, 2007. These numbers include children covered under S-CHIP.

2. The story quotes Roy Mitchell, director of the Mississippi Health Advocacy Program, as saying the state recently used a federally funded grant to study expanding Medicaid, and one of the proposals would extend coverage to 90,000 Mississippians “without added costs.”

Medicaid did participate in a Lewin Group report that identified three options for dealing with Medicaid, but none were “without added costs.” The one option quoted would require recipients themselves to buy into the program and pay the full cost of premiums. It is simply inaccurate to say the Lewin Group report found that Medicaid coverage can be extended “without added costs” that must be paid by someone.

3. The Clarion-Ledger consistently gives more credence to representatives of special interests who stand to benefit the most from criticizing and complaining than to, in this case, official information and statistics from Medicaid. The newspaper should check its facts before simply regurgitating criticisms by parties who stand to gain from stories reported from their advocacy point of view.

In item number 2 above, the newspaper let one of these representatives of a special interest group opine about the results of a report without bothering to research what the report actually said.

4. The premise in Natalie Chandler's second and third paragraphs came directly from a press release issued by the Center for Mississippi Health Policy, but was not attributed to this special interest group.
5. The number of Mississippians with private health insurance has actually increased by 87,000, a fact the Clarion-Ledger chose not to report. Such an increase in people covered by private health insurance is a logical explanation for a decrease in people covered by Medicaid.
6. The number of people on Medicaid is supposed to do down when the state's economy is growing and 40,000 more people are employed.